

Vacancy Announcement Number: EPA-Exec-2017-0004
Senior Executive Service (SES) Candidate Development Program
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Date 11/16/2016

Application of: _____

Email: _____

Qualification Highlights

- Served as a manager and first-line supervisor in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 2 for eight (8) years
- Lead on the Hazardous Wastes Management, Superfund and Brownfields programs in the Caribbean
- Keynote speaker for international and national conferences
- Expert in the development of Brownfields programs in the Caribbean
- Government security clearance

MANAGEMENT POSITIONS

Chief of the Response and Remediation Branch, GS-15 December 2012 - Present
Caribbean Environmental Protection Division (CEPD), EPA-Region 2, Guaynabo, PR

- Provide regulatory and enforcement oversight for the EPA-Region 2's CEPD under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and Superfund for the Caribbean (Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands).
- Provide financial and technical assistance to the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board (PREQB), the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources on the development of their Voluntary Clean-up and Brownfields Program.
- Provide financial and technical assistance to the PREQB to support its Hazardous Waste Program and Superfund projects.
- Provide leadership to 18 staff of engineers, scientist and administrative.
- Oversee 20 contracts for environmental investigations and cleanups and 17 Brownfields Cooperative Agreements.
- Provide advice and recommendations on the management of hazardous wastes project in the Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands.
- Provide advice and recommendations on environmental emergencies and time critical environmental cleanups.
- Leading the Branch to ensure CEPD's goals are met or exceeded.
- Occasionally serve as the Acting Director of CEPD (SES position).
- Evaluate and develop annual strategic plans for the Branch to ensure consistency with the EPA national strategic plan.
- Provide media interviews (television, radio, newspaper) in both Spanish and English.
- Prepare and conduct technical and non-technical briefings to senior management.
- Prepare and conduct technical and non-technical presentations to stakeholders in Spanish and English.

Chief of the Brownfields Section, GS-14 June 2010 – December 2012
Program Support Branch, Emergency and Remedial Response Division, EPA-Region 2,
New York, NY

- Planned, organized and directed the EPA-Region 2 Brownfields Program.
- Provided leadership to 12 staff of engineers, scientist and administrative.
- Advised and provide mentoring to assigned staff regarding policies, procedures, and directives of management and the Brownfields Program.
- Provided effective management to meet Brownfields programmatic goals and objectives.
- Planned, analyzed and developed policy proposals for implementation of a comprehensive Brownfields program in Region 2
- Served as key advisor to senior management on all matters relating to Brownfields program.
- Conducted formal and informal program briefings and presentation to all Region 2 stakeholders, elected officials, and international visitors.
- Tracked and monitored Brownfields Section's budget.
- Provide media interviews (television, radio, newspaper) in both Spanish and English.
- Prepare and conduct technical and non-technical briefings to senior management.
- Prepare and conduct technical and non-technical presentations to stakeholders in Spanish and English.

EXECUTIVE CORE QUALIFICATIONS

LEADING CHANGE

As the Chief of the Response and Remediation Branch for the Caribbean Environmental Protection Division of the Environmental Protection Agency-Region 2, I succeeded in promoting and developing a Brownfields Program in the Caribbean (Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands). Since 1996, EPA Region 2 has been working with the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board (PREQB) and the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Natural Resources (USVIDPNR) on the development of their Brownfields Programs and with eligible entities to apply for Brownfields funds. I was challenged to promote and increase participation on the Brownfields Program in the Caribbean. I correctly identified two main factors that prevented the Caribbean area to take advantage of the Brownfields Program. The first factor was the lack of understanding of the Brownfields Program. The second factor was a degree of mistrust from the communities and local governments. In order to address those factors, I developed an aggressive and innovated outreach strategic plan that included: (1) face-to-face meetings with elected officials (senators, representatives, head of agencies, mayors, and governor's staff), federal partners, businesses, and developers; (2) workshops for eligible participants, elected officials, businesses, and developers on Brownfields; (3) presentations/speeches on public forums to present the Brownfields Program; (4) trainings to all eligible participants on Brownfields grants; (5) technical and financial assistance to conduct environmental assessments; and (5) interagency workgroup meetings. As a result of this effort, Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands had passed their respective Brownfields legislation and are in the process of establishing their Brownfields Program; a total of 26 Brownfields grants have been awarded to 12 communities in Puerto Rico totaling over \$6M; over 100 properties have been assessed in Puerto Rico; over 20 properties have been assessed by the U.S. Virgin Islands Brownfields Program; and an increase on support from communities, local and central government, businesses and developers.

LEADING PEOPLE

As the Chief of the Response and Remediation Branch for the Caribbean Environmental Protection Division of the Environmental Protection Agency-Region 2, I am responsible for leading a diverse group that includes the Superfund Remedial Program, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Enforcement Program, RCRA Corrective Action and Permits Program, Emergency Response Program, Superfund Removal Program and Brownfields Program in the Caribbean (Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands). I learned that employees were complaining about lacking of guidance, consistency, and directions from management, leading to low morale, lack of motivation and productivity. Before my appointment, the staff was managed by at least five temporary branch chiefs resulting on inconsistency on directions, lack of motivation, low morale, and lack of accountability. The branch had several management and technical challenges that prevent achieving EPA's vision, goals, and objectives. I identified the following management/administrative challenges: (1) inadequate oversight of time and

attendance, (2) lack of administrative/management support, (3) limited promotion opportunities, (4) lack of career development opportunities, (4) training and travel fund limitations, (5) limited overtime/compensatory time, (6) lack of recognition/incentives, (7) lack of communication between staff and management, (7) lack of proper technical training and support, (8) lack of program protocols and guidance, and (9) no accountability. In order to address those challenges, I worked with the employees and senior management on: (1) revision of employees' workload, (2) preparing program protocols, (3) preparing team work plans, (4) conducting team progress-report meetings, (5) conducting in-house technical training, (6) creating detail opportunities, (7) conducting administrative trainings, (8) identifying national initiative and workgroup opportunities, (9) resolving conflicts with respect to roles and responsibilities, (10) creating cross-divisional training opportunities, and (11) creating merit promotions. Working with the Human Resources Branch under the EPA Region 2 Personnel Management and Human Resources Division, I developed four (4) new position descriptions resulting on the promotion of four employees to a GS-13 level within the branch. In addition, I was able to create a GS-14 team leader position for the RCRA program to assist the RCRA Team to continue achieving their goals and commitments. I created a detail opportunity for the branch to work on Brownfields resulting on selecting another employee from a different branch within the division. I revised and reassigned projects among the employees to balance their workload to allow them to participate on national initiatives and workgroups of their interest. I prepared a protocol for RCRA inspections to properly describe step-by-step process of an inspection resulting on reducing the preparation of inspection reports from 180 days to 45 days and increasing the accuracy of data entry to almost 100%. Improve on time and attendance practices as evidenced by the no significant findings during the last regional time and attendance audit. Also, as a results of the actions taken, the branch has met all its annual commitments for the past three years. Employees' morale has also increased as evidenced by their increase interest and active participation on national initiatives and workgroups.

RESULTS DRIVEN

As the Chief of the EPA Region 2 Brownfields Program Section, I learned that the regional Brownfields Program was not achieving their annual commitments, had a low rate of grant applications, had a high amount of inactive grants, and a high unliquidated balances on old grants reflecting no significant progress on their projects. I was challenged to improve the performance of the regional Brownfields Program by achieving the annual targets, reducing the amount of unliquidated balances on active grants, increasing the amount of grant applications, increasing the amount of new grants in the Region, and increase the regional contribution related to the national targets (jobs and dollars leveraged). Within the first two months as a Section Chief, I met with the regional Brownfields Program staff, EPA Headquarters Brownfields staff, EPA Region 2 senior management, and existing grantees to gather information and a sense of the situation. After that, I developed with the staff a strategic plan to address the situation. Within six months of my tenure, the staff was conducting workshops and presentations on Brownfields across the region and conducting face-to-face meeting with grantees to provide technical assistance. In addition, I completed an evaluation on the performance of the old grantees and obtained information that allowed the Region to report accomplishments not reported before. I

conducted monthly status meeting with the staff to provide an update of their projects and monitoring the annual targets. Also, I got directly involved with EPA Headquarters Brownfields Program staff to enhance the communication with the region. As a results, I was able to report over 300 properties assessed that were not considered before. In addition, over 20 inactive grants reported 200 properties assessed and closed them out. I reduced the amount of unliquidated obligation by 80% the first year and then 95% by the second year. Over 30 Brownfields grants workshops were conducted across the Region increasing the amount of Brownfields proposals to up to 30 proposals per year. I increased the amount of grants awarded to the region by 20%. In addition, I provided EPA Headquarter National Brownfields Program with the job and dollars leverage necessary to meet the national commitments.

BUSINESS ACUMEN

As member of the EPA National Brownfields Program staff in Washington, DC, I was responsible for leading the Brownfields Assessment, Cleanup, and Redevelopment Exchange System (ACRES) team. ACRES is an extremely important database, which is used to provide accurate information on program measures in the response to congressional and White House inquiries, to prepare speeches, to prepare congressional hearing documents, to prepare accomplishment reports, to prepare press releases, to be used on national and regional program evaluations and to maintain the community informed. At the time of my tenure, the team has been working for over four (4) years on a new ACRES version without significant progress and over-budget. The team has expended over \$8M in this project. Due to federal government budget constraints the National Brownfields Program received significant cuts on its assigned funds, creating a difficult situation to afford to continue expending funds in this project. In addition, the national program was not providing timely accomplishments and measures since the data was not accurate and updated at the end of the fiscal year. During my one-year tenure, I was able to modify existing contract, resulting on saving approximately \$300,000; launch the new ACRES version; provide accurate and timely program measures and accomplishments; and issue a new ACRES contract. In order to achieve these results, I prepared a strategy that involves (1) the creation of a team to evaluate level of efforts required and technical modifications to ACRES; (2) the evaluation of level of efforts resulted on the reduction of 60% of the original IT technician workforce; (3) prioritize the technical modifications to ACRES resulting on the launch of the new ACRES version three (3) months ahead of schedule. This allowed the National Brownfields Program to report accurate and complete program measures and accomplishments by the end of the fiscal year. In addition, I revised and modified the contractual scope of work for a new ACRES contract by working with another federal agency under an existing Interagency Agreement resulting on an overall reduction of \$600,000 from the previous contract.

BUILDING COALITIONS

As the Chief of the Response and Remediation Branch for the Caribbean Environmental Protection Division of the Environmental Protection Agency-Region 2, I created the Interagency Workgroup Meeting (IAWG) to encourage municipalities in Puerto Rico to use innovative ways to improve their environment, social and economic conditions. Due to the current economic situation, the 78 municipalities in Puerto Rico are experiencing difficulties to impulse economic

redevelopment projects in their communities. The key members of the IAWG were: the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 2, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Agriculture- Rural Development (USDA-RD), the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Office of the Governor of Puerto Rico- Federal Affairs Office. In addition to the key members, the IAWG also includes Commonwealth agencies, such as: Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board, Puerto Rico Department of Transportation and Public Works, Puerto Rico Solid Waste Authority, Puerto Rico Department of Sport and Recreation, the Puerto Rico Tourism Company, the Office of Municipal Commissioner, Puerto Rico Industrial Development Company, Puerto Rico Department of Housing and Puerto Rico Department of Health, among others. Two IAWG meeting cycles were done, all the 78 municipalities in Puerto Rico participated in each cycle. As result of these meetings the IAWG provided technical, financial and administrative assistance to 53 municipalities. Some examples of accomplishments are: (1) the USDA-RD was able to provide \$267,000 to the Municipality of Aguas Buenas to rehabilitate an abandoned building into a Youth Center; (2) technical assistance from HUD allowed the Municipalities of Maunabo and Las Piedras to obtain federal funds to build parking facilities and enhance infrastructure; (3) HUD worked with the Municipality of Carolina on an affordable housing project for low income families; (4) SBA provided technical assistance to the Municipality of Jayuya on ways to enhance businesses (new hotel, restaurants and a panoramic cable car attraction); (5) the municipality of Caguas was able to obtain \$13.5 million for water supply improvements assigned under the discretionary funding from Congress; (6) the Municipality of Humacao was able to obtain \$2.45 million from a Governor's discretionary funds to complete a Fine Arts Center; (7) the Municipality of San Sebastian was able to obtain approximately \$300,000 on construction material to restore the "Plaza Central" of the town; (8) the Municipality of Las Piedras was able to obtain \$1.9 million to complete a street connector needed to reduce traffic congestion in the downtown central business district; (9) technical and legal support was provided to the Municipality of Arroyo on a harbor revitalization project; (10) EPA conducted three environmental assessments for the Municipalities of San German, Aguadilla and Toa Baja at a cost of over \$180,000; and (11) USDA-RD provided \$400,000 to the Municipality of Maricao for a low income housing restoration project. In order to achieve these results, I had to overcome several obstacles. Some of those obstacles were: (1) language barriers, (2) funding constraints, (3) coordination of multi-agency efforts, program overlaps, among others. To overcome the language barriers, I conducted the meetings in Spanish and English. To overcome funding constraints, multi and coordination I created different ways to combine funds to support municipalities needs (i.e. grants, loans, donations).

OTHER PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS HELD

January 2009 to February 2009 – ACRES Team Leader

June 2006 to December 2008 – EPA-Region 2 Brownfields Coordinator

August 1993 to June 2006 – Remedial Project Manager

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS/HONORS/AWARDS:

- Member of the International Coaching Federation (2016)
- Superior Achievement Award (2014,2015, 2016)

- The Regional Administrator's Award for Excellence Service (2011, 2012)
 - Region 2 Team Award (2014, 2015, 2016)
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EDUCATION AND SPECIALIZED

- Bachelor of Sciences, Chemical Engineering
- Master of Science, Environmental Planning
- Creative Coaching Certificate
- Situational Leadership Training